strange
bird
womyn's
zine

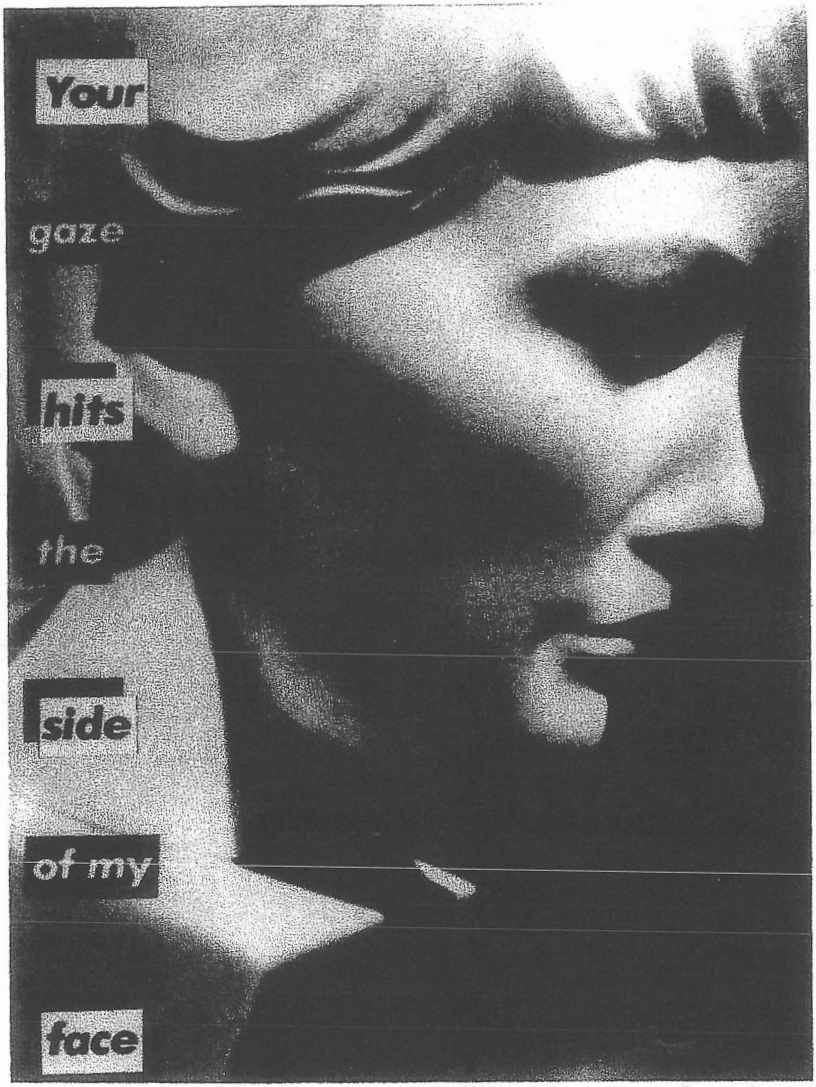


Figure 1.13 Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (**Your gaze hits the side of my face**)* (photograph, 140 × 104 cm) 1981 (photo: Zindman/Fremont: courtesy Mary Boone Gallery, New York).

In ancient China, women were excluded from any standard education. there was never any formal education for women until the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) and only those parents who were rich enough to "waste" money on the education of their daughters.

Even though poor women were deprived of the right to receive any standard education, some still found a way. They created their own language-nushu;

Nushu means "women's writing" or "women's script." It was a special script invented and circulated only between women for a long period of time in Jiangyong, a small agricultural region located at the southeast of Hunan Prefecture, China. used secretly by local women and no man ever learned it.

nushu is a written language that they created their own language, a contains around 2,000 characters with secret code between women that men were not allowed to learn. "no spoken counterparts."

When they worked, they loved to sing folk songs or recite simple poems. A strong companionship developed between them. They would then make pledges and swear that until the end of their lives, they would treat their female companions as well as or even better than real sisters. This tradition was called "sworn sisters," a lot of nushu materials produced were letters to sworn sisters.

They composed verses and songs. They wrote nushu on fans and they would even embroider their work on handkerchiefs, cloths and quilts.

when a woman died, her nushu works would be buried with her

Chinese is boxier, like a square, but nushu is rather wispy and cursive; it is written in a more elegant way.

Sanchaoshu is a cloth booklet full of nushu songs and poems written by mothers or sworn sisters to a newly married woman. Jiejiaoshu is not a booklet for marriage; rather it is comprised of the commitments made by sworn sisters. It is a book of vows.

when facing the patriarchal culture and its orthodox language, women created something by and for themselves.

in the early 20th century Schools were built for both boys and girls.

Fewer women learned nushu

nushu was listed as an evil feudal leftover during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) and a lot of materials were destroyed. Women who had nushu knowledge were seized and condemned. Those who survived the ordeal were too afraid to mention nushu again. Nushu has become a dead language.

nushu, the one and only female script ever found in the world, Christie K K Leung

ART VS. ACTIVISM

the way passion & creativity can rise above the need of the caring, concerned, progressive person to make activism the axis on which their world spins. activism doesn't have to be explicit in order to exist. if i want to change the world, i need to start by valuing the things that bring meaning to my life, & for me, that's art, creating art as if the revolution has already been won, & that brings hope hope, in turn, fuels passion, which is the necessary ingredient to the culmination of real social change, radical people have a responsibility to "live in such a way that doesn't make a mockery of their principles." believe in yourself, do whatever it is you can do to make your dreams a reality, no matter how de-valued your efforts & talents might be.

Words from Ciara's zine "A Renegade's Handbook to ♡ and Sabotage"

ART & SOCIAL CHANGE

artists have a responsibility to be transcendental, to rise above the madness of a dystopian society & create pieces of beuaty & truth as if the revolution has already been won. artists have always had a place in history, in motivating people to fight for change & giving them a vision to work towards. the concept of being a joyless automaton, robotically agitating for social change until it finally happens & then being at a complete loss as to how to incorporate art & creativity back into the new society is pretty unappealing. efficiency & tactical logistics don't always leave room for the human element, i really don't want to be part of a revolution that refuses to be holistic. maybe part of the role of the artist in times like these is to put poitive, transcendental energy out into the world, which others can pick up on & use as fuel. not that there is no room for critical art that reflects the pain in the world, holding the mirror isn't enough—the artist must also consider what they are choosing to illuminate, & how, & why

Yet, later, it can seem that what you had your heart set on would not have worn so well, nor made you as happy as

you are what is female
you shall be called Eve
and what is masculine shall be called God.

and from your name Eve we shall take
the word Evil
and from God's the word Good.
now you understand patriarchal morality.

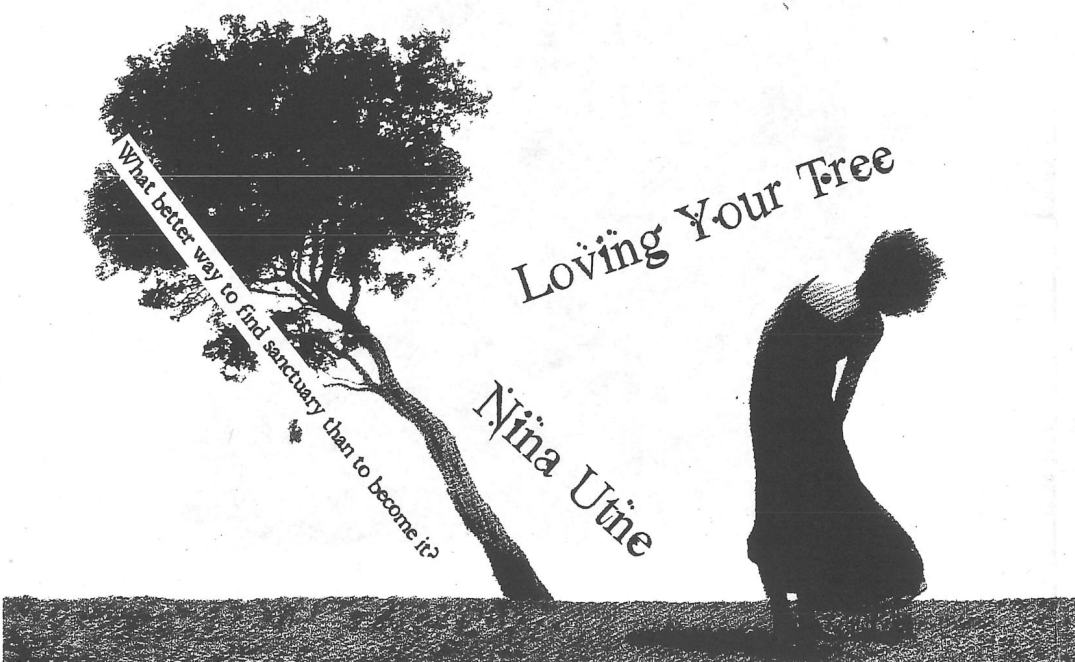
— Judy Grahn

A long time ago, my mother made a casual remark that if she were to have plastic surgery anywhere, it would be on her hands, where the veins bulge and the skin broadcasts its age unmistakably. As I watch my fingers move across my computer keyboard, I look at my hands and see my mother's. But I also remember walking in the woods a few years back on a bracing, wet day, colors and shapes in sharp relief. I was focused on the next step, on not tripping in the web of tree roots, when I suddenly recognized that the veins in my hands looked just like the roots at my feet.

Something shifted in me the day that I saw veins as tree roots. I started seeing stretch marks in rivulets skimming the sand, cellulite in cloud formations. In her book Refuge, Terry Tempest Williams describes dunes: "Wind swirls around the sand and ribs appear. There is musculature in dunes. And they are female. Sensuous curves—the small of a woman's back. Breasts. Buttocks. Hips and pelvis. They are the natural shapes of earth. Let me lie naked and disappear."

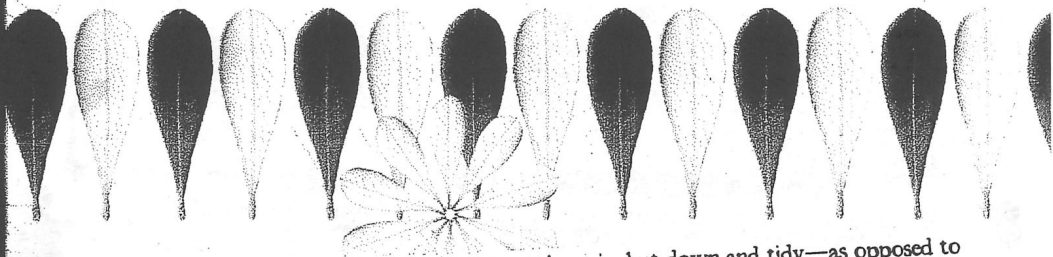
These days, at age 50, I am slightly obsessed with the variety and beauty of tree bark, by the fact that the smoothness of a sapling is no more beautiful than the ridges and folds in the bark of a mature tree.

That's why I was so struck by The Good Body, a new one woman show by Eve Ensler □of The Vagina Monologues fame□. In one particularly powerful scene, Ensler asks the character Leah, a 74-year-old African woman, if she loves her body. "Oh, yes," answers Leah. She describes what she loves about her body, including the moons on her fingernails. She goes on to point to one tree and then another. "Eve, is one of those trees more beautiful than another? You must love all the trees, and you must love your tree."



On the day after I saw the play in mid November, I talked with Eve, the two of us curled on either end of a red couch in her Manhattan apartment, which is simultaneously a womb and an aerie, both peaceful and fiery, an apt reflection of Eve herself. I asked her what role spirituality plays in her life. She told me that she spent a year going to churches and temples and every other kind of place spiritual practice was going on, finding herself drawn to aspects of Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism. Ultimately, she found all monotheism antifeminist because, she asks, "With one god, are women ever included in the agenda?"

The right path has to be individual, the one that "moves the currents of your soul," she says. We talked about how our bodies have the capacity to hold rage, sorrow, joy, all together. But when we shut down and label feelings and reactions—or bodily parts—wrong or bad or frightening, we stop our breath and energy and, along with them, our ability to respond creatively and powerfully in the present.



So much about what passes for beauty in our culture is shut down and tidy—as opposed to what Eve calls "messy-gooey beauty, the richness of a sorrow that we can't control. I've seen awful things—refugee camps, burned women, skulls on riverbanks–but I have a clarity of purpose ... which allows me to see all that and keep going."

In my mind, all of this connects to our sense of busyness and stress, our yearning for sanctuary. The fundamental place we need to find sanctuary, both physically and emotionally, is in our own bodies and in their connection to the earth. What better way is there to find sanctuary than to become it? As long as we judge ourselves and resist the discomfort of "messy-gooey beauty" we restrict our life force and, along with it, our ability to take effective action. "Activists are my role models because they transform destructive energy," says Eve. For her, such transformation is at the heart of beauty.

What is the status of Indigenous women and Indigenous feminism in Australia?

Rochelle Jones

Indigenous Australians, who constitute approximately 2.2 percent of the population, continue to fall behind other Australians in statistics on mortality, health, education, incarceration and economic status. Statistics from the 2001 census indicate the extent of these inequalities:

* The death rate among the Indigenous population was more than twice the death rate for the total Australian population. The death rate for Indigenous people aged 35-44 was over four times for Australians as a whole;
* Life expectancy for Indigenous females is 63 years, compared with non-Indigenous females at 82 years;
* 36% of Indigenous students continued to their final year of high school education compared with 73% of all students;
* The unemployment rate was 23.0% for Indigenous adults compared with 7.4% for non-Indigenous adults;
* In the three months of April, May and June 2002, Indigenous women were 20 times more likely to be in prison than non-Indigenous women. This level of over-representation was higher than for Indigenous men who were 15 times more likely to be in prison than non-Indigenous men; and
* Research suggests that Indigenous women and children are more than 45 times more likely to be victims of domestic violence and more than 8 times more likely to be victims of homicide.

Why are Indigenous women not represented within the Australian Women's Movement?

The absence of an Indigenous voice in Australian feminism has a distinct, historical context. According to Aboriginal writer Bronwyn Lea Fredericks, "Aboriginal women generally found little comfort or support from non-Indigenous women in Australia who were active participants in the marginalisation and the denial of human, civil, political, legal, sexual and Indigenous rights of Aboriginal women. Their attitudes, like male attitudes, were and are forged within different race, class, sex, colonialist and neo-colonialist practices". In this context, the Australian Women's Movement has not questioned its position of "whiteness" and how this position has impacted the discourse and knowledge of the Australian Women's Movement. Fredericks asserts that gender in Australia, as elsewhere, is lived through racism, sexism and classism, and that Aboriginal women have remained on the margins of feminist debates.

Australia's colonial legacy:

Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were valued and

respected and were not of lesser value to men, until the onset of white colonisation brought the destruction of Indigenous communities and environments, and the position and power of women was degraded. Deborah Bird Rose, in her paper on Indigenous Land Rights, explains how the Indigenous woman was "erased" from the history of land ownership in Australia, rendering her spiritual and cultural connections to the land obsolete. Instead of a world where women and men complemented each other and the earth with their own ceremonies, songs, law and sacred sites, after colonisation, Indigenous women were brought in under the umbrella of androcentric and patriarchal views of society where women are marginal to spritual and social life. Coupled with racist understandings of Indigenous people being more equal to that of animals than humans, Indigenous women were reduced to "diseased sex objects" to be used and abused by non-Indigenous men.

When discussing the current Women's Movement in Australia then, Fredericks explains why Indigenous women cannot embrace a collective feminism: "We stand and watch non-Indigenous women argue for something which we had and which they assisted in disempowering us of".

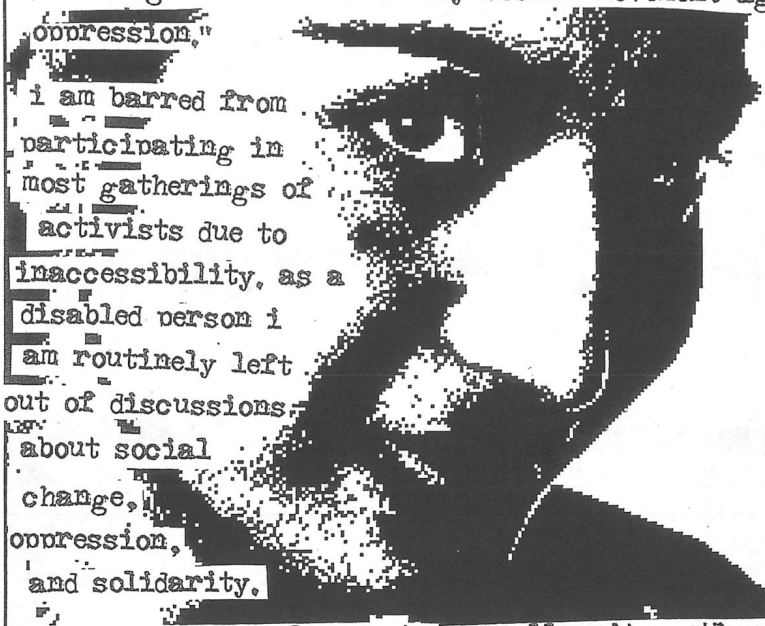
This is a common theme amongst Indigenous women activists. Jackie Huggins, an Indigenous activist and writer in Australia, explains that there are some issues where Indigenous women can form alliances with non-Indigenous women, but that the form of feminism that is available to Indigenous women is not the model they prefer. Instead, they have their own brand of feminism that's all-encompassing. Jackie also believes that there has been a misappropriation of culture by non-Indigenous feminists and scholars, and that they have given back very little to the Indigenous communities in return.

Are there ways of moving forward for collective feminism in Australia?

As to the question regarding how the schsim between Indigenous and non-Indigenous feminists can even begin to be addressed, Fredericks believes that the answer lies in the Australian Womens Movement's recognition of the multiple attributes of whiteness and feminism. It is only when non-Indigenous women in Australia recognise and deeply understand how race and class shapes gender in Australia, that collective feminism will have a foot to stand on. Jackie Huggins is not so sure. Whilst she says that she believes in feminism and embraces its terms, she believes that the historical legacy of black and white women in Australia is a difficult barrier to cross.

International networking and solidarity with other Indigenous groups could be a way of making the Indigenous Australian feminist's voice resonate louder, and Jackie Huggins believes that there are alot of commonalities between Indigenous peoples globally. Overcoming the suspicion, misunderstandings and mistrust, however, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women in Australia is something that can only be solved locally with concerted effort, and with a passionate intent.

as marta russell writes in her article "the social movement left out": "It is disheartening, to say the least, when I can still pick up a book or read a call for unity to fight for social justice which omits or does not give equal weight to the disability social movement against oppression."


i am barred from participating in most gatherings of activists due to inaccessibility, as a disabled person i am routinely left out of discussions about social change, oppression, and solidarity.

in the same article, marta russell writes: "When the left leaves us out of its analysis, or includes us in a cursory manner as 'other forms of oppression' this is clearly not sufficient. It only leads to the suspicion that there is no real understanding of disability oppression."

this issue is just as important and the oppression is just as brutal as all other forms of oppression. i am daily forced to experience ableist oppression and the false constructions of "normalcy" and "wholeness" in which it is rooted. there are so many disabled activists expressing and advocating for ourselves and so many nondisabled activists and communities who are not paying attention. the widespread disinclusion of this issue in radical/anarchist discourse leaves me to wonder if, "after the revolution", will we still be left to die, or taken on as "charity"

We hope to find out why we breathe

Pain comes in waves

why do we breathe?

Some of us are always alone

pause breath

Each time it's worse

Our capacity for suffering is not infinite

The pills keep us alive

We break bleed break

heart beat beat beat

We try to hide it

We try to stop it

We can't stop it

We are finite

We just put off the end

the end

"Why fool around with hamburgers when you can have steak at home?" Paul Newman, when asked about why he's never cheated

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMYN: FACTS & FIGURES

Anywhere from one-quarter to one-third, and even up to one-half, of Australian women will experience physical or sexual violence by a man at some point in their lives, as nationally representative surveys have found.

In the last year, between five and ten per cent of Australian women experienced at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence by a man. ABS national survey (2006)

In the last 12 months: One in 20 women (5.8%), or over 440,000 women, were the victims of violence in the last year. 4.7% (363,000 women) experienced physical violence (including physical assault, attempted assault, or the threat of assault). 1.6% (126,100 women) experienced sexual violence (including sexual assault, attempted assault, or the threat of assault).

Violence during a lifetime:

Over one-third (39.9%) of Australian women report experiencing at least one incident of physical violence or sexual violence since the age of 15. Since the age of 15, an estimated 3,065,800 women had experienced violence. 29% of all women (2,243,600 women) had experienced physical assault, and 17% (1,293,100) had experienced sexual assault.

SOURCE: A national survey of 16,500 Australian adults

AIC national survey (2004)

In the past 12 months: 10% of Australian women reported experiencing at least one incident of physical and/or sexual violence by a man. They were more likely to report physical violence (8%) than sexual violence (4%).

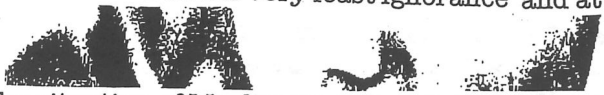
Violence during a lifetime:

Nearly two-thirds (57%) of Australian women report experiencing at least one incident of physical violence or sexual violence by a man over their lifetime. (48%) have ever experienced physical violence, (34%) have experienced sexual violence. (34%) who have ever had a boyfriend or husband report experiencing at least one form of violence during their lifetime from an intimate male partner.

SOURCE: A national survey of 6,677 women aged 18-69.

Stolen Voices of Muslim Women Joumanah El Matrah

The shedding of crocodile tears over the plight of Muslim women has come to characterise many self-proclaimed feminists, journalists and government officials. The plight of Muslim women has become a paradigm of victimhood. Instead of working with Muslim women as one disadvantaged group among many in Australia, Muslim women have been misrepresented and used under the pretence of feminist discourse and exploring multiculturalism in a way that reflects at the very least ignorance and at worst racism.



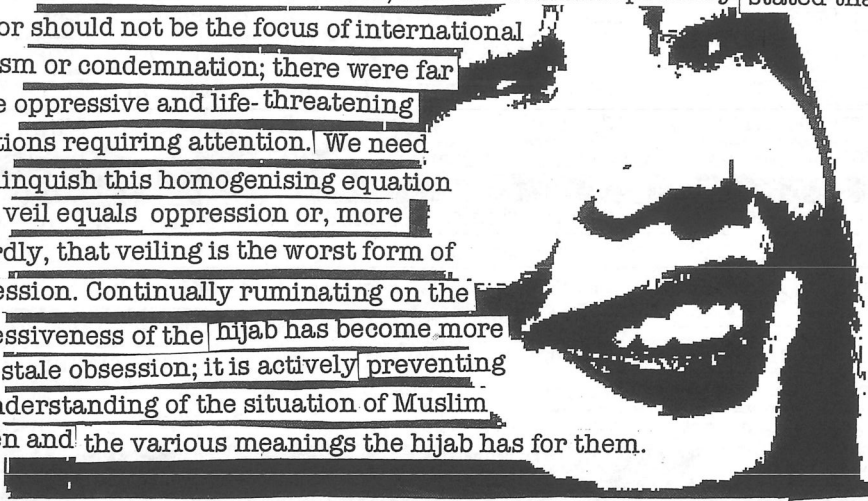
The situation of Muslim women globally is too complex and contradictory for one comprehensive critique. In some nations Muslim women experience horrendous forms of violence and oppression, often under the label of Islam. To explain the reality and suffering of women in such nations by reducing it to a simple consequence of Islam becomes impossible when, in neighbouring Muslim nations, women occupy positions of power in significant social and political institutions. Without denying the inequities and barriers women face in these countries, we can say that women in Syria and Tunisia hold 10.4 per cent and 11.5 per cent respectively of seats in parliament, compared with 12 per cent in the United States and 11.8 per cent in France. In Tunisia, 24 per cent of magistrates are women and the penal code now defines domestic violence as aggravated assault, bringing heavier penalties than assaults between unrelated individuals. In Syria, maternity leave and national child care for many professions are provided by the state. Muslim women have arrived at those positions with greater speed and impact than women in Western nations, given that significant literacy and education levels are new to many Muslim-majority countries.

Perhaps concern for the oppression of Muslim women is more correctly identified as concern at the intrusion of Muslim women into Australia. Just as there are vast differences in the situation of Muslim women, there are significant differences in how women define, understand and practise Islam. In Australia, the representation of Muslim women has been deceptively homogenised, particularly among public commentators who have taken it upon themselves to speak on behalf of Muslim women.

One of the most common strategies in the attack against Muslim women is the representation of the hijab, or head scarf. There appear to be two major arguments: firstly, that most Muslim women are forced to wear the hijab and,

secondly, that the hijab is by its very nature oppressive. These arguments not only misrepresent Muslim women who don't wear the hijab, but also those tha do. The reality is far more complex. In Saudi Arabia and other so-called Islam states, Muslim women are punished for not wearing the hijab. In non-Islamic "progressive secular" states such as Turkey and France, Muslim women are punished for wearing the hijab. Many Muslim women have resisted laws enforcing different forms of veiling. In response to the Ayatollah Khomeini's decree that all Iranian women must adopt the chador, a long scarf that completely covers women's hair and body, women staged massive demonstrations, sit-ins and work stoppages; Khomeini responded by having women tortured and murdered by law-enforcement agencies.

Nonetheless, women continued to resist and many religious women participated because they opposed the chador's violent enforcement. In 1981, in part as a result of demonstrations against enforced veiling of women, it was widely believed that more than half the political prisoners in Iran were women. Yet even in such dire circumstances, Iranian women repeatedly stated that the chador should not be the focus of international activism or condemnation; there were far more oppressive and life-threatening violations requiring attention. We need to relinquish this homogenising equation that veil equals oppression or, more absurdly, that veiling is the worst form of oppression. Continually ruminating on the oppressiveness of the hijab has become more than a stale obsession; it is actively preventing an understanding of the situation of Muslim women and the various meanings the hijab has for them.



The feminist tradition has always treated women's voices as sacred, so why isn't enough when some women state that the hijab is both meaningful and empowerin for them? Why must the interrogation continue, to the neglect of all else? The focus on the hijab often conceals other, more important issues. In Afghanista the preoccupation with the burqa - an all-encompassing robe that covers the hea face and body down to the ankles - as evidence of Islamic excesses blinded many to what would have been obvious if Afghans had not been Muslim. The Taliban, among other violations, excluded women from education on the grounds that it was a violation of Islamic teaching. A basic understanding of Islam shows that th Koran teaches that women have a right to education. An astute analysis, then, would have focused on the Taliban's incipient fascism rather than questions of Islam's compatibility with human rights and women's dignity.

Judging from the commentary in Australia, it would appear that Muslim women are capable neither of understanding nor of speaking on such issues as sexism, discrimination, equality or justice. In reality, Muslim women have a notable and proud tradition of activism. Why is it, then, that we hear so little of it? Perhaps the concern for the oppression of Muslim women is more correctly identified as a concern about the intrusion of Muslim women into the Australian landscape. Instead of being understood, Muslim women have been relegated to being saved. The historical discourse on Muslim women's emancipation might be crudely summarised as follows: colonising nations were to save us from Islam's misogyny, then the socialist/nationalist movements were to save us from our imperial masters, then the Islamists were to save us from nationalist heresy and the evils of the West, and now the human rights movement offers itself as our saviour. Pardon us if we don't faint in anticipation!

Muslim women have long responded to the calling of a movement of themselves and for themselves, working against the historical tendency of Muslims and non-Muslims to speak about and for Muslim women. There is now a 1400-year history that resolutely proves that neither Muslim men nor Western societies are fundamentally interested in facilitating our rights, and it is perhaps unreasonable to expect otherwise.

In the West, and Australia in particular, a significant amount of Muslim women's time "on air" has been used to either explain the hijab or to advocate women's right to wear it. There are many consequences of this, but two urgent issues are that Muslim women increasingly appear incapable of addressing any other issue and that in restricting ourselves to this topic, an opportunity has been created for Muslim men to monopolise and define Islam. (This is one of the major issues women have with the current explosion in inter-faith dialogue meetings.)

To have men as sole representatives significantly skews not only the representation of Islam and Muslims, but also what Islam and Muslims will develop into in this country. Similarly, allowing ourselves to be co-opted by democratic" movements in the West has also compromised the position of Muslim women, as Western powers have repeatedly demonstrated their delusion that they have a God-given right to do as they please in Arab and Muslim lands.

Joumanah El Matrah, a former psychologist born in Lebanon, is manager of the Islamic Women's Welfare Council of Victoria.

Women with disabilities are one of the most marginalised and disadvantaged groups in Australia.

There are 1.8 million women with disabilities in Australia

Women with disabilities are less likely to be in paid work than other women, men with disabilities or the population as a whole. Men with disabilities are almost twice as likely to have jobs than women with disabilities.

Women with disabilities earn less than their male counterparts. 51% of women with a disability earn less than $200 per week compared to 36% o men with a disability. Only 16% of women with a disability earn over $40(per week, compared to 33% of men with a disability.

Women with disabilities are less likely than their male counterparts to receive a senior secondary and/or tertiary education. Only 16% of all women with disabilities are likely to have any secondary education compared to 28% of men with disabilities.

Women with disabilities spend more of their income on medical care and health related expenses than men with disabilities.

Women with disabilities are substantially over-represented in public housing, comprising over 40% of all persons in Australia aged 15-64 in this form of tenure. Women with disabilities are less likely to own their own houses than their male counterparts.

Girls and women with disabilities are more likely to be unlawfully sterilised than their male counterparts.

Women with disabilities are often forced to live in situations in which they are vulnerable to violence. They are more likely to experience violence at work than other women, men with disabilities or the population as a whole.

Women with disabilities are more likely to be institutionalised than thei male counterparts.

Women with disabilities pay the highest level of their gross income on housing, yet are in the lowest income earning bracket. Some women with disabilities pay almost 50 per cent of their gross income on housing and housing related costs. Over 20% of women with disabilities living in public housing are dissatisfied with the service they receive from their State or Territory housing authority.

Women with disabilities are less likely than women without disabilities to receive appropriate health services, particularly breast and cervical cancer screening programs, bone density testing, menopause and incontinence management.

Regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or class, women with disabilities are assaulted, raped and abused at a rate of at least two times greater than non-disabled women. Statistics indicate that 90% of women with intellectual disabilities have been sexually abused. 68% of women with an intellectual disability will be subjected to sexual abuse before they reach 18.

Women with disabilities have a consistently higher level of unmet need thar their male counterparts across all disability levels and types.

Source WWDA

Plenty of people think that I choose to be fat. Currently, it's popular to believe that everyone's weight is a choice, readily influenced by eating and exercise. This is a big, fat lie.

Why would anyone (the government, doctors, advertisers, the media) lie? To make money. Fat hatred -- and fear of fat -- sells. Every year, Americans waste $50 billion on products that promise (and fail to deliver) lasting weight loss. In fact, the ongoing existence of weight-loss methods (plural) is proof that all of them conform to the medically documented 90 percent to 98 percent failure rate; i.e., if any one of them "worked," the rest would be out of business. (Failure is necessary for their business model. Repeat customers, and all.)

Believing the lie (that I choose to be fat) allows two important fantasies to persist. #1. The fantasy that everyone can access the good life (money, sex, happiness, near-eternal longevity, basic human respect) via calorie-counting or carb-constraint or cardio-crunching or whatever the latest, thin-seeking fad is. #2. The necessary corollary fantasy that fat people like me really are lazy, stupid, gluttonous, undisciplined, smelly, dirty "others" who deserve all the mistreatment we get. After all, we - perversely -- choose it.

Let's call #1 and #2 what they really are: thin supremacies and fat oppression. The negative stereotypes and stigma that American culture currently applies to fat people are the same epithets that have been used to justify every other outsider group. Prejudice isn't a new, or inventive, process. (And no, I'm not equating fat prejudice with the horrifying toll of racism or sexism or homophobia, I'm just saying they have similar mechanisms to their various ends.)

Here's what I choose. I choose what I eat (good nutrition). I choose how I exercise (regularly). I choose to celebrate my unique body, which happens to be fat. (I look like my beautiful, 81-year-old fat mother, which is my honor and my birthright.) The average reader will be incredulous...I *must* be doing something wrong, otherwise our fair-minded universe wouldn't have cursed me with a socially disapproved weight/body. That's called blame-the victim. I've done nothing wrong. And even if I did eat nothing but donuts, anti-fat prejudice would still be a serious wrong. Instead, I eat when I'm hungry and stop when I'm full, filling my moderate diet with grains, veggies, all the yummy stuff that's available where I live in San Francisco. No, my hunger is not gargantuan, it's normal. I don't starve myself, so I have no interest in binging.

Well, then, I must be sitting on the couch all day? Not so. I delight in regular exercise. Each week, I do aerobics, yoga, and water aerobics.

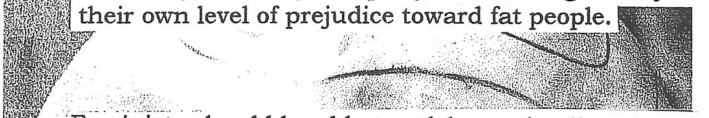
(right) Jenny Saville, *Plan*, 1993. This is one of a series of huge paintings the artist based on herself which takes self-portraiture into the realms of issues of concern to women. The subject here is bodily self-image. The mountain of flesh is marked with geographer's contour lines that show the shape and the height of the land. They also suggest the marks made by plastic surgeons before they cut into the body for cosmetic surgery.

FAT & CHOICE MARILYN WANN

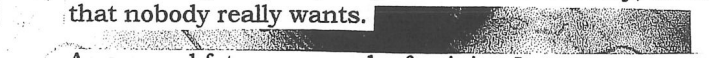
I choose my behaviors, but I don't choose what shape my body is. That's not something anyone can, or should, attempt to control 100 percent. We are, each of us, a mix of nature and nurture. What our weight-obsessed society currently refuses to acknowledge is that, in the case of weight, nature is stronger than nurture. Based on studies of identical twins, researchers estimate that weight and height are equally genetically predisposed.

As feminists, we should be smart and skeptical enough to see through the lies that justify fat hatred. We should recognize that we're living in dark times, where body image is concerned. Body hatred is the norm, now. It's the rare woman who *doesn't* have a somewhat disordered relationship to food and eating. As feminists, we should be able to recognize the witch hunt on fat and we should be independent and courageous enough to ask the ultimate, unthinkable question: "What wrong with being a witch?" In other words, what is so very wrong with being fat? We should be ready to listen to and join with radical healthcare professionals from the Health At Every Size paradigm who argue that the data do not support this monomania on weight, that people naturally come in all sizes and can be healthiest through good behavior, not through BMI. The sciences have been mis-used throughout history to

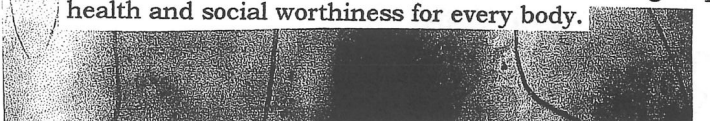
rubberstamp mainstream oppressions. Doctor doesn't know best when he or she is perpetuating bias, stereotype, stigma, and hate. Correlation does not equal causation. If a fat person experiences poor health, it might just be because we're ridiculed in fitness establishments, because we've undergone repeated, dangerous weight-loss attempts, because we receive less medical care and a poorer quality of care than thinner people, because we are targets of stressful discrimination and social isolation. When Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research head researcher Steve Blair, MD, looked at just one of these important variables (fitness), he found that fatter people who exercised regularly were healthier and lived longer than thinner people who were sedentary. The only thing anyone can diagnose by looking at a fat person is their own level of prejudice toward fat people.



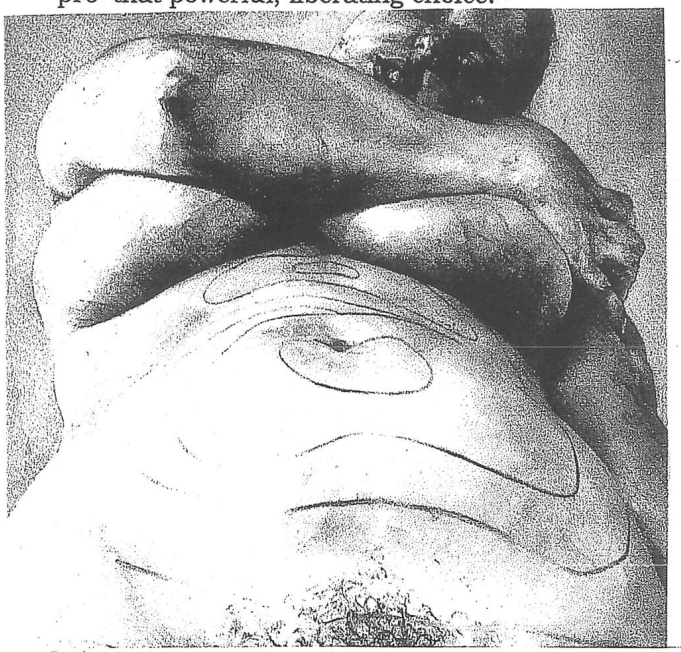
Feminists should be able to celebrate the diversity of human body shapes and sizes, should understand that people can and should exist at all points along the weight spectrum. We should divest from an oppressive system of thought that, taken to its logical conclusion, expects all humans to exist in a very narrow range of (thin) weights. That's not reality, that's something monolithic that nobody really wants.



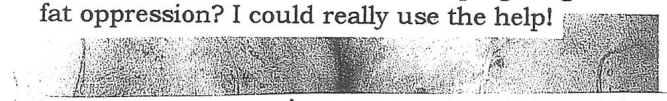
As a proud fat person and a feminist, I want to offer a third choice to fat and thin brothers and sisters who have been suffering under a false dichotomy. Our society has had us convinced that there are only two choices: either one is thin (and happy and healthy and socially worthy) or one is fat (and thus unhappy, unhealthy, and socially unworthy). There is a third choice: celebrating everyone's unique body and welcoming all possible happiness and health and social worthiness for every body.



Sometimes, my fat sisters and brothers (at increasingly lower weights) insist they have no other choice but to undergo a mutilation that I refuse to call by its sanitized name of weight loss surgery, but instead give truer names: stomach amputation, gut lobotomy, surgical starvation. They are so invested in the false hope of thin supremacies that they can't imagine (much less hope for) a world that celebrates weight diversity. They have heard so many death threats (really, sales pitches) that they are willing to undergo a dangerous, experimental, undocumented procedure that kills one in 50 people within the first month, post-op. When I argue that there are other choices, they claim I'm trying to take away their allegedly only choice. (There make inapt analogies to abortion and a woman's right to choose). Yes, we each have sovereignty over our bodies. Like early proponents of birth control, I'm in the position of trying to an option other than lose/lose. (I think people are "losing" on both sides of the fat/thin divide, because that divide alienates fat people and thin people from our own bodies and from genuine relations with each other.) What about the win/win option of good health behaviors (good nutrition, joyful movement) *AND* good body image for people of all sizes? I encourage feminists to be 'pro' that powerful, liberating choice.



I choose to fight fat oppression. I find this struggle to be much better for me -- physically, psychologically, and politically -- than the weight-based paradigm ever was. It's actually easier and more possible to change the world than it is to change one's own body. To paraphrase George Clinton, "Free your ass and your mind will follow." Will you stop fighting fat and join in the fight against fat oppression? I could really use the help!



A woman who doesn't care what men think of her + ah, this is dangerous. This is the worst conceivable insult to the male ego. ++ Martha Shelley

I DIDN'T GO TO WORK TODAY...

For me, being an artist is being an activist, agitating for a different way of life, demanding that my positive contributions to society are seen as valuable.

...I DON'T THINK I'LL GO TOMORROW

LET'S TAKE CONTROL OF OUR LIVES AND LIVE FOR PLEASURE NOT PAIN

"But this is how the revolution begins: a few of us start chasing our dreams, breaking our old patterns, embracing what we love (and in the process discovering what we hate), daydreamming, questioning, acting outside the boundaries of routine and regularity. Others see us doing this, see people daring to be more creative and more adventurous, more generous and more ambitious than they had ever imagined possible, and join us one by one. Once enough people embrace this new way of living, a point of critical mass is finally reached, and society itself begins to change. From that moment, the world will start to undergo a transformation: from the frightening, alien place that it is, into a place ripe with possibility, where our lives are in our own hands and any dream can come true."
-- from POSITIVE*YOUTH FOUNDATION #1

makes you want to stay up late and get up early in the morning to do. Something you feel passionate and urgent about.

Once I decided that I was never going to work again,

Australian Government

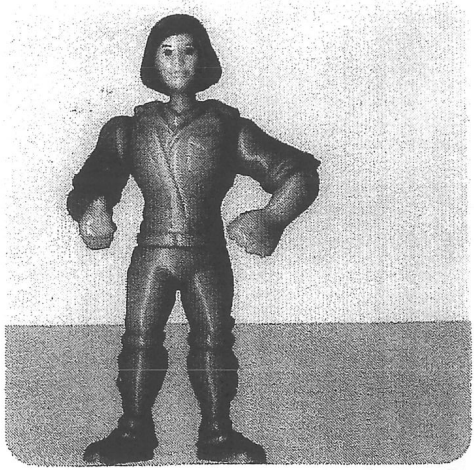
who want to break free, rebel and live out your real dreams: JUST DO IT!!!

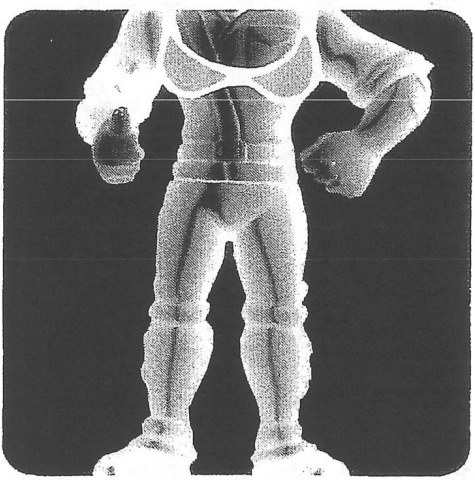
Penny
fr. Ladylike Zine

'menacingly attractive... Expect to be seduced and appalled in equal measure'

To create one's own world in any of the arts takes courage. ++ Georgia O'Keeffe

what if i grow a beard what
if i have a hole in my shirt
what if i get off on her what
if i go to bed early what if i
ride a fifty dollar bike what if
i have a long hair on my nipple
what if i pick my nose what if
i watch midday television what
if i sniff my arm pit what if
i look girly today what if i
never look girly what if i
kiss her in the main street
what if i make trashy art what
if i scratch myself in public
what if i grow a beard what if





artwork by Monique Cronje

Politics is our attempt to either bring about or resist change on a collective, societal level. Politics involves how we channel and direct the collective power or energy that we have. Political change is the collective equivalent of personal growth. Collective focus brings about change in institutions, just as individual focus brings about change on a personal level.

When we become frightened of domination or economic upheaval, our collective process becomes conservative—i.e., we struggle to maintain the *status quo* and resist change at any cost. Any deviation from the known or familiar is viewed as a threat which might force change; therefore, it is attacked. On the other hand, when we feel at ease (e.g., physically superior, economically secure), our collective political process may become more liberal and open—i.e., we are open to considering new alternatives.

When we talk about creating a revolution, we are implying that we want to bring about a complete and radical change in the way in which we live and relate to each other. Violence, or intense and extreme force, is usually seen as necessary for any successful revolution. However, if we wish to create a nonviolent society (in the most general, nonoppressive sense), then we must find a model for using our power to bring about change that is itself nonviolent. ~~In order to develop such a model,~~

Dorothy I. Riddle

In actuality, the means that we use shape who we are. We cannot separate the means from the end. The end toward which we are moving is constantly changing and the only thing that we have in the present is the means. If we ignore another's pain, we perpetuate the objectification of others which leads to violence. If we set aside our own needs, then we once again invalidate our own sense of what is important and do violence to ourselves.

Conquest revolution is a model of change based on an awareness of the need for change in others, individually or collectively. Any ultimate vision is static, since the need for control supersedes any willingness to allow for the ambiguity of continued change and growth. The goal is postulated as the one "right action"—i.e., whatever action is considered as "politically correct." Force is viewed as both appropriate and essential in order to assure ultimate success.

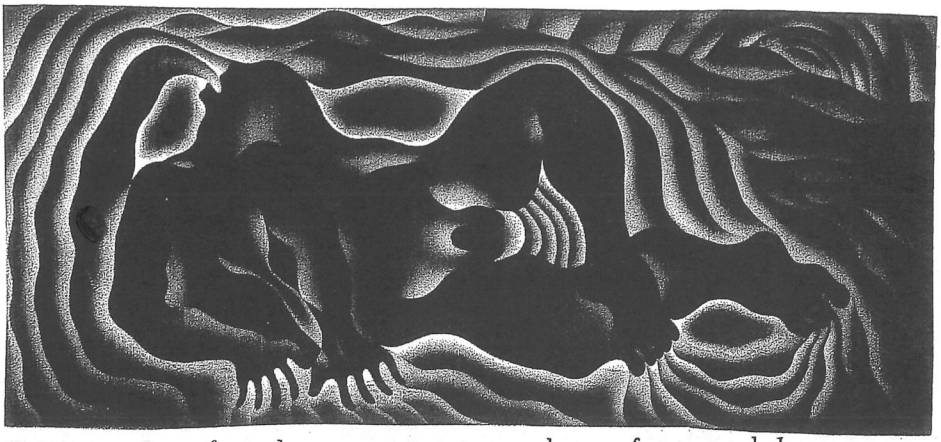
Consensus revolution is a process of identifying and stating one's own needs and then releasing them to be met in ways never before imagined. It is a process of sharing one's vision with others and negotiating a gestalt which incorporates that vision without becoming attached to any one vision as better. It is the process of coming together to create a qualitatively different product than what each could create separately. It is working toward specific societal changes while remembering that ultimately one can change only oneself.

In developing a model of consensus revolution, we need to keep in mind several aspects of creating change. When we oppose someone in direct conflict, we force that person backwards and by doing so we add energy and revitalize that negative position. We come to harm only if we stand still, and fear freezes us in a position from which we cannot move. Anger makes us blindly charge ahead while we are still attached to the past and not free to come up with new visions and alternatives. Sometimes we have to choose to move backwards or sideways in order to gain the necessary perspective or momentum to carry us past a particular difficult point.

The process of consensus revolution follows the cycle of change that involves creating, developing, and ending. Any cycle of change is both an end in itself and a means to an end not yet conceived. It is analogous to the constant process of creating and sloughing off cells in our own bodies.

Creating a vision is crucial to deciding where we are going to focus our energy. We cannot begin without a vision, yet we also need a vision that can be changed as we live it out. Our different political beliefs may come from slightly different perspectives on a shared vision.

Violence is the abuse of power either actively by harming another, or passively by allowing oneself to be harmed or by ignoring one's own needs. It is crucial for us to understand the complexity of trying to define violence. There is no one action that is violent or nonviolent. It is the intentionality behind that action which makes it either violent or nonviolent. If someone is about to harm me, my acting to stop them from harming me is not violent. If I harm them more than is necessary in order to stop them, that excess is violent. Similarly, if I were to do



Because a group of people once gave me two apple trees for my yard, I arrived at my own definition of the difference between *power* and *control*. This happened to me as a result of understanding the nature of apples, how they come about. An apple is something real which is created; this is *power*. Only an apple tree can make an apple, no one else can. The wealthiest magnate on Earth cannot make an apple no matter how he might stand in the sun, or squat or contort his flesh. He does not have the power of an apple tree to make apples and neither does anyone else. He can own them. He can fence them, transport them, plant and prune them; he can bulldoze them, line them up in military formation, poison them, grind them up, bore them to death, set fire to them, graft them and use them; and this is *control*. He can never, from the substance of his body, make an apple as an apple tree can; this is *power*.

Judy Grahn

A zine lovingly made by The Womyn's Action Collective, your feminist collective at UTS. All womyn are welcome to come along to our weekly meetings in The Womyn's Space. Contact the Womyn's Officer for more info: 9514 1155 (ask for Oishee).

Queer Womyn can go to ♀ OUTS as well, weekly meetings in the Queer Space- contact Jaki (queer officer) on the same number.